

2024 MCAS Educator Professional Development

Essay Participant Pack

English Language Arts (ELA)

Grades 3-5

English Language Arts

Read the story about a rocket launch contest, and then answer the questions that follow.

Winning

by Joseph Yenkovitch

- 1 Tom Perry concentrated hard. The rocket competition would begin shortly, and he wanted to be sure he hadn't left any detail unchecked. No possible glitch was too small to be ignored. Nothing could jeopardize his winning.
- 2 He had never lost a contest, but that didn't calm him. Being on top counted, and he pushed himself to remain there.
- 3 The other kids, however, rarely came over to him. Whenever they did, it usually made him feel like they'd been forced to do it. No way, though, was he going over to them. He'd win again, and they couldn't ignore that.
- 4 He opened his toolbox. Pushing aside engines, igniters, glue, tape, and microclips, he pulled out the pieces of his launch pad and began assembling it.
- 5 A shadow fell over him, and he looked up. His father stood there. . . .
- 6 "How's it going?" his father asked.
- 7 "Fine," Tom replied, grunting as he tried to put one leg of the launch pad in the wrong way and finally turned it around.
- 8 His father pursed his lips. Tom knew the look. It meant he had something important on his mind.
- 9 "Relax," his father said. "Enjoy yourself. You've done the best you can, haven't you?"
- 10 Tom nodded. He wanted to say he always did his best. He won every time, didn't he? Mostly, though, he wanted to ask why it made so little difference. Why didn't being first make everyone like him better?
- 11 He felt his father's hand on his shoulder. When he looked up, he was almost sure his father understood. But did he really understand losing and what it meant? No one had much to do with him now. What would happen if he lost?
- 12 Time was passing, and he hadn't started readying his rocket. "Uh, Dad . . ." he said.

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- 13 "Oh sure," his father replied. "Good luck." He winked and went to the bleachers.
- 14 Tom checked his rocket again. Everything from the smooth fuselage* to perfect aerodynamics told him he had another winner—especially when he glanced at the other rockets.
- 15 He noticed problems quickly. A green rocket had dents and rough areas around the decals: drag. He knew its altitude would be limited. Another had fins too close to its center of gravity: without a doubt the rocket would tumble. A red rocket with overly wide fins showed cracks where the stages met. Uncalled for, he felt. Sloppiness.
- 16 One rocket, however, caught his eye. Its finish glinted in the sun. The painted areas were finely done, and the seal between the stages was practically invisible.
- 17 It had the look. His critical eye detected that this rocket could beat his.
- 18 A thin boy lifted it carefully. Tom turned away and started placing the igniter wire into his engine. It slipped from his hand and became lost in the grass. Unable to find it, he found another one and fitted it carefully into place.
- 19 "Hi," said a voice out of the blue.
- 20 Tom looked up. The thin boy peered down, a nervous smile on his face. His hands jingled coins in his pocket.
- 21 "Nice rocket you've got there," the boy said.
- 22 "Thanks," Tom replied without much emotion, then regretted it. "Looks like you spent a lot of time on yours. Where do you fire it? I haven't seen you at any of the competitions."
- 23 "In the field behind my house. By the way, my name's Ed."
- 24 "Tom. You don't care for these contests?"
- 25 "I never really thought about them. I keep pretty much to myself."
- 26 One of the other boys walked past and tapped Ed on the arm. "You're new here," he said. "Maybe you can beat him." The boy glanced down at Tom, but there wasn't any warmth in his face.

*fuselage—the main body of an aircraft

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- 27 “Guess you’re king of the hill,” Ed said.
- 28 Tom waited for a snide remark, but it didn’t come.
- 29 “Well,” Ed said, “good luck. Maybe sometime we could . . . well, see you after the contest.” He walked away and knelt beside his rocket.
- 30 Seeing the rocket again gave Tom a sinking feeling in his stomach. He ran a hand through his damp brown hair and wiped it across his blue T-shirt. Trying to ignore his nervousness, he sat back on the grass, propping himself up on his elbows. A refreshing breeze started. The airless, sticky morning was changing. Pulling out his notes, Tom matched up these conditions with those of previous flights to see what angle his launch pad would need. He didn’t have to alter a thing.
- 31 The announcer asked for everyone’s attention and proceeded to explain the competition. Tom barely listened, his gaze constantly drifting to Ed’s rocket.
- 32 Suddenly his heart did a leap, and he sat upright—within a fraction of a second, Tom knew that Ed had no chance of winning.
- 33 Tom had noticed that as Ed lifted his rocket to place it on the launch pad, one fin had caught against something in the ground, pulling it away from the fuselage. Not enough to break it off, just enough to loosen it. Immediately the fin resumed its proper place, only now it was fatally weakened.
- 34 But Ed hadn’t noticed. He glanced back at Tom and gave a thumbs-up sign. Tom felt a twinge of regret but decided he wasn’t going to jeopardize a sure win by saying anything. Anyway, it was up to Ed to keep checking his rocket.
- 35 The announcer called the first contestant. A blond-haired girl excitedly clipped on the firing wires. With a facial expression that made it seem she was setting off a pound of dynamite, she pressed the ignition button. The rocket spit out exhaust and sped upward, then quickly tumbled, hitting the ground. It sputtered, firing its second stage into the grass. Teeth clenched, the girl walked back to the other contestants.
- 36 The second rocket flew a considerable distance, but Tom noticed an obvious wobble and knew that would certainly reduce its altitude.
- 37 And so it went, one rocket after another, most gaining respectable heights, while a few careened wildly. Men at tracking stations that looked like giant protractors far off to each side of the launch pad scribbled down numbers.

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- 38 Tom watched, but the problems the others had didn't make him feel good. For the first time the looks on their faces bothered him.
- 39 Someone made a joke, and that got everyone laughing. . . . Tom felt twice as alone now. He would have his victory, yet they seemed to be having more fun. The knowledge he had about what was wrong with their rockets soured within him. It felt like something he had stolen. He pulled at a few blades of grass.
- 40 "Ed Malovich will be our next contestant," the announcer said, interrupting Tom's daydream. Immediately Ed lifted his rocket and started to the launch area.
- 41 Without thinking, words flowed from Tom's mouth so that it almost surprised him to hear them.
- 42 "Ed, hold up!" he yelled. Ed stopped. Heads in the bleachers turned, watching him.
- 43 "What is it?" Ed asked.
- 44 Tom walked up to him and pointed at his rocket. "It's your fin. It's loose."
- 45 Alarmed, Ed looked down and tested the fin. Like a broken wing, it bent. He held it up to the announcer, who gave him five minutes to fix it.
- 46 "You should have kept quiet," Ed said. "You'd have won for sure."
- 47 A few minutes later Ed's rocket blasted skyward, shooting up flawlessly. No wobbles, cutting the air as though it knew nothing could stop it. Higher and higher it climbed, a puff of smoke indicating the second stage had fired, and soon after another puff signaled that the parachute had deployed. Even without tracking equipment, Tom could tell it had beaten all the others easily.
- 48 Everyone cheered. Tom watched so intently that he didn't hear his name being called. When it was repeated, it startled him.



- 49 He moved to the pad. The excited jabbering of the other kids continued, but he tuned it out. Nonetheless, his fingers trembled as he connected the wires to the igniter. He wondered if he should have said anything. Who would have known?
- 50 Stepping back to the firing board, he took a deep breath and pushed the button. For the briefest moment there was nothing, only a dreadful silence. He let out a tiny gasp.
- 51 Then, as though finished with its little joke, the rocket roared to life. Spitting smoke, it leaped from the pad—true in its direction—slicing the air effortlessly. It climbed wonderfully. Tom anxiously awaited the second puff. When it came, the rocket sped higher, seeming as though it could puncture the blue sky and speed into space. Then the parachute deployed, and it drifted down leisurely.
- 52 Tom ran out into the field as the rocket swung to the ground. As he picked it up along with the first stage, he heard the numbers being announced.

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- 53 They were read in the order of the flights. Tom ignored them, only interested in his and Ed's.
- 54 "Ed Malovich," the announcer boomed. Tom perked up and watched Ed. "Eleven hundred fifty feet." The crowd came to life. No one else had reached a thousand feet.
- 55 Tom wrapped the string from the parachute around his hand. For the first time, he realized he was standing in the field alone. Alone in victory or a sitting duck in defeat, he thought.
- 56 He started walking as his name was called. He stopped. The crackle of paper came over the loudspeaker, and there was a pause. Tom stared at the mountains in the distance.
- 57 "Eleven hundred feet."
- 58 The number struck Tom a blow. He began walking one way, then turned, not sure of where he was going. Voices spread from the bleachers, a great noise from which he wanted to escape.
- 59 Squeezing his rocket, he strode from the field. At his toolbox he methodically put everything in its place, amazed at how his attention to detail hadn't left him at this horrible moment. Still his hands gripped each object as though he hated it.
- 60 A hand fell on his shoulder. He kept his head down, not wishing to face his father. But that's not who it was.
- 61 "Thanks," Ed said, when Tom finally looked up. "Sorry you didn't win." Tom could almost feel that he meant it. He stood up.
- 62 He noticed a few other kids who'd gathered around him. A tall boy walked past and smirked. "Finally got your butt kicked, huh, Perry," he said. Tom stepped backward, glancing at the others.
- 63 "Don't mind him," a blond girl said. "It was nice what you did. Both of you are great rocketeers."
- 64 Another boy piped up. "Do you think you could help us with ours?"
- 65 "I'd like one to fly up, not down," the blond girl said. Everyone laughed.
- 66 "Well, sure," Tom replied. He felt awkward. "Anytime."
- 67 "We're going over to my house," Ed spoke up. "See you there?"

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68 Tom could only nod. He wanted to say something, but just couldn't. All he did was stare after everyone as they left. At that moment he felt relaxed, and the competition seemed very far away.

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For this question, you will write a story based on the passage(s). Write your story in the space provided on the next page. Your writing should:

- **Use characters, settings, events, and other details from the passage(s).**
- **Use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.**

Based on “Winning,” write a story that tells what will happen when Tom goes to Ed’s house. Use what you know about the characters, settings, and events to write your story.

Write your answer on the next page.

Grades 3-5 English Language Arts Essay Rubric

Idea Development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QUALITY AND DEVELOPMENT OF CENTRAL IDEA * • SELECTION AND EXPLANATION OF EVIDENCE AND/OR DETAILS * • ORGANIZATION • EXPRESSION OF IDEAS • AWARENESS OF PURPOSE FOR WRITING 	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central idea is clear and fully developed • Effective selection and explanation of evidence and/or details • Effective organization • Clear expression of ideas • Full awareness of the purpose for writing
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central idea is general and moderately developed • Appropriate selection and explanation of evidence and/or details • Moderate organization • Adequate expression of ideas • Sufficient awareness of the purpose for writing
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central idea may be present and is somewhat developed • Limited selection and explanation of evidence and/or details • Limited organization • Basic expression of ideas • Partial awareness of the purpose for writing
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central idea is not present and/or not developed • Insufficient evidence and/or details • Minimal or no organization • Poor expression of ideas • Minimal awareness of the purpose for writing
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response shows evidence the student has read the text, but does not address the question or incorrectly responds to the question.

*For narrative writing (Standard 3), the quality and development of narrative elements will be assessed in place of a central idea. Narrative elements should include, but are not limited to: plot, character, setting, dialogue, action, and/or description. Students should use evidence/details to demonstrate understanding of text.

Standard English Conventions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SENTENCE STRUCTURE • GRAMMAR, USAGE, AND MECHANICS 	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent control of a variety of sentence structures relative to length of essay • Consistent control of grammar, usage and mechanics relative to complexity and/or length of essay
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly consistent control of sentence structures relative to length of essay • Mostly consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to complexity and/or length of essay
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little control and/or no variety in sentence structure and/or • Little control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to complexity and/or insufficient length
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentences are formed incorrectly with no control of grammar, usage and mechanics and/or insufficient length.

Anchor Set of Student Responses (with scores)

Idea Development: 4

Conventions:3

"Thanks again, Tom." Ed said as they walked through the grass to Ed's house.

Tom just nodded. He wasn't used to people thanking him, or at the least smiling at him. They walked through the path, Ed telling Tom stories about his rockets. Tom hoped that Ed would turn out to be the good friend that he seemed like; but Tom was still worried. Tom didn't talk much, except for sometimes a "Yes," or "I see." He didn't want to mess up his chances of having a friend. The truth was, Ed's stories were actually interesting. He would be at Ed's house shortly, and he didn't know what to say.

"That's how I built the fuselage of that rocket. I named it alien 11, because I painted it green. And here we are." Ed pointed to a light gray house, with a field in the back. Tom saw model rockets in one window, probably Ed's room. "Come on in!" Said Ed, opening the front door. Tom walked inside, and up to Ed's room. He found model rockets, real rockets, rockets poster, and even some autographs from real rocketeers! Tom stood in awe, while Ed bounced onto his bed.

"Wha... How...When..." Tom stuttered, in wondering what to say. He was amazed by Ed's obsession. Ed hadn't really been this obsessed with rockets at the contest.....

"We could test one." Said Ed, holding a shiny red and blue rocket. The expression on Tom's face said it all. All afternoon, they tested, compared, and launched rockets in the field.

"Would it be okay if we built a rocket?" Tom asked, feeling shy. He dug his hands into his pockets. "Like, just me and you?" He felt his face getting hot, and his palms were getting sweaty. Ed didn't reply. Tom's heart started racing.

"Sure." Ed replied. They started planning.

"What if ..."

"Maybe." At last, they had come up with a plan. They built, tested, and tweaked their rocket. Ed brought out a special engine.

"I've been saving this one." Said Ed. They carefully put it in place. Ed walked over to a special place in the field. "This is where I always launch mine." Ed almost looked.... Shy!

"Perfect." Tom said, trying to comfort Ed.

"You do the honors." Said Ed, handing the rocket over to Tom. Tom took it gracefully with two hands. He gently placed it on the launching pad. He connected the igniter and the engine, checking to see if there were any problems.

"Three, two, one, blastoff!" Their rocket soared into space; only leaving behind their friendship.

Idea Development: 4

Conventions:3

It's a day after the competition, Ed and Tom agreed to have a playdate. They both decided to go to Ed's house. Tom was sitting in the car as his mom drove him to the house. Once Tom got there his mom drove off. He was about to knock on the door when Ed appeared from around the corner.

"Oh, hi Ed." Tom said. "Hi, sorry if I startled you." Ed replied and opened the door.

"Woah, your house is nice." Tom said looking around the room. "Thanks, my mom and I decorated it." Ed and Tom sat down on the soft, black leather couch. Tom eyed the toolbox. It had baby blue paint on it with a shiny handle, no rust once so ever, and inside it were clean tools and nails. Tom was so jealous of how it was in such good shape.

"Oh, you're looking at that? I've had that for a while now, it was a birthday present." Ed said. "It's an amazing birthday present." Tom said. "I need to get something, I will be right back." Ed ran upstairs. Tom started to worry that Ed didn't want to talk to him anymore because he had been up there for a while.

A few minutes later Tom decided to go check on Ed. He got upstairs but soon got distracted by the decorating skills. *Snap out of it!* He told himself and continued looking. He found Ed's room and looked through the crack of the door opening. Everything was teared apart, his drawers were open and there was paper scattered all over the floor. *He must have been looking for something.* Tom thought. "I found it!" Ed held up a miniature, toy rocket. "This is what inspired me to make rockets," He said "I kept on practicing but I never knew I would make it this far." "Maybe you could help me with my rockets?" Tom asked "Like how do you make them go so high?"

The boys got downstairs and talked about inventions and memories. And so they became bestfriends and teammates for future competitions.

Idea Development: 3

Conventions:3

Tom went to Ed's house later in the day. Ed's house had a huge backyard. It was 4:00 in the afternoon and the sun made the sky light blue. Tom met most of the kids Tom saw at the rocket competition. Then the kids asked Tom how to make their rocket fly higher than before. Tom told a blond haired girl to make her rocket smoother. Then, he told the kid with the sloppy rocket to spend more time working on his rocket. When Tom looked up there was a long line of kids waiting for Tom to help them. Then, he told another kid to have the fins farther away from the rocket's center of gravity. "Next" said Tom and the next kid in line walked to Tom. The kid showed Tom his rocket. His rocket was lime green with sky blue swirls and it had bumps and dents. Tom told him to make his rocket more aerodynamic. When Tom was finished, he went to talk to Ed about the competition. "you did pretty well at the competition" Tom said. "Yeah I did" replied Ed. Then kids couldn't wait for the next time they were going to have a competition. Then Ed helped a few kids about their rocket. Then Tom helped a few kids about what to do about the weather conditions. "if it is sticky and airless like today you have to angle your launch pad higher." Tom said looking out the window. Tom felt like he was giving back what he stole from them. He felt like a hero of some sorts. He was giving advice to most of the kids who's rocket didn't go that high. "to make your rocket go higher you have to make your rocket smoother to prevent your rocket to wobble." Tom said to one kid. Then, It was getting late so Tom said goodbye to everyone and left. When Tom left he felt a wave of happiness wash over himself. Tom couldn't wait for the next rocket competition.

Idea Development: 2

Conventions:2

Today, Tom was going to Ed's house! He brought his special microchip to show Ed! Tom got picked up by Ed's dad. When they arrived Tom said "Wow! Nice house!" "Thanks," They both walked into the house and went to the kitchen. Tom and Ed talked while they had lunch.

Then, they both walked up to Ed's room. "Wow! I love this room!" Then Tom and Ed tried to build a robot. But, it failed.

After that, they tried to build a rocket. By accident, Tom put his microchip inside the rocket without noticing! Then, they both tried looking for the microchip for 2 whole hours!

Finally, Tom found out that he put the microchip inside the rocket. Then, they had to take the rocket apart. Tom finally found the microchip! But then, it was already 5:00! "Tom!" Tom's dad yelled. "Coming, sorry I have to leave for dinner, Bye Ed!" "Bye Tom!" "Maybe we can hang out tomorrow?" Tom yelled to Ed from outside. Ed gave him a thumbs up.

Idea Development: 1

Conventions:1

When Tom goes to Ed's house Ed says "this is it, my home." Tom says "wow, cool"after Ed gets to the field behind his house with Tom behind him Ed asked "do you want to launch some rockets?" "YEAH!"Tom yelled far away from him. After a rocket or two Ed asked "do you want a snack?" "ok" Tom said. Finally Tom said "I have to go see you later." "ok see you later." Ed says.

Idea Development: 0
Conventions:0

Well Tom always win in evrey competition but he felt nerveous about the rocket competition. so he made a rocket then E'd comes and introduce himself to tom the setting is out side is wher the competion.

Set of Student Responses without Scores (for educator practice)

After the contest I asked my farther if I could go to Ed's house. "Sure son go right ahead, but be back by 8:00 ok?" My farther said. "Ok. I said. So I go to Eds house.

I knocked on Ed's door. I hear a voice from inside "WHO IS IT"." Tom from the rocket contest." I said. It took 12 seconds for someone to awnser the door.

Me and Ed were having fun until we lost one of his action figures. "What are we going to do!" Ed said with a suprised look. "We look." I said with a confident grin.

So we looked in looked all over the house. Under Ed's bed, in the backyard, even on the couch in the living room. But we saw nothing. We went back in the room sad. I sat on Ed's bed. I felt something on my hand. It was Ed's action figure! It was on his bed all along.

It was 8:00 when I left and that day I had made a new friend.

I can do this, I can do this. I don't know why I was so nervous to be at Ed's house. I stood on his straw doormat and slowly reached my hand out to ring the doorbell.

Ding Dong, Ding Dong. As soon as I rung the bell I instantly heard some of the kids rushing towards the door to let me in. I'm really hoping that they enjoy me and that I'll be able to fix their rocket's. I mean, they didn't looked that messed up. Only a little mistake here and there.

Ed finally comes to the door and meets up with the rest of us who have standing in the doorway for a few minutes now. "Would you like a tour of the house?" Ed asks us.

"Sure, that would be great," I respond.

"Whatever you guys want to do," said the blond haired girl.

First Ed shows us the kitchen, then he shows us the living room, next he shows us his bedroom, and finally he gets to his backyard, which by the way is *huge!!!* It has dried up grass, it's all an open space, there are practicly no bumps or hills, it's perfect for flying and testing rockets. I wish I could come here more often! I can't wait to test the other kid's rockets.

"Are you ready to help us?" One of the boys' asked.

"Yeah, what's wrong with your rocket?" I answered.

"Well, I think that the wing is dented because it never flies properly."

"That's an easy fix! All you need is a new wing which I already I have."

"Awesome!!! My rocket will finally fly correctly!" He exclaimed.

I helped out the 3 other kids who all had things that I fixed. Now that everyone's rocket has been fixed, we are going to have a friendly match.

"3, 2, 1, blast off!" Ed screams. The colorful tubes burst into the air, all of them going higher than ever. I stop to enjoy the moment. I can pretty much taste the breezy air in my mouth. I can smell the variety of flowers next to me. My hand are on my forehead blocking the sun from hurting my eyes. I see everyone's rocket high in the sky. I hear silence as everyone watches.

It was a close call but Ed won, once again. Eveybody's parents starting pulling in the driveway so people are saying their good-byes. "Thanks so much for fixing my wing, Tom," A girl shouts before getting in her car.

"No problem," I yell back.

"You guys are welcome anytime, just so you know," Ed states happily.

I was also happy by that comment. You know, today had been awesome. Even though I lost the competiton, I got to hang with the other kids which made me feel included and awesome.

Response C

Idea Development: Conventions:

Finily we are here says Ed. Where is your bathroom Tom asks. Down the hall Ed replies. When Ed gets to the garage we all help each other with are rockets eventually we come up with a idea so good it will always win. Ed gets the matirials we all start building. We have to come up with a name for it Tom says. How about sky tamer Ed says. Yes we all agree next year we will win.

Response D

Idea Development: Conventions:

"Bark! Bark!" A small tan and brown pug comes bouncing towards Ed.

"Hey boy!" Exclaims Ed, scratching the back of the dogs ear. Ed and the dog lead us towards a small yellow cottage, with a large, green backyard. "Is that your house?" asks the blond haired girl. The tall boy roles his eyes. "What do you think?" he asks. Ed jumps in. "Yeah, its my house."

They all walk around the nicely planted garden, with bright yellow and lavender flowers, and into the backyard. Ed smiles. "I'll be right back!" he calls, running into his cozy house. Everyone turns to Tom, who is trying to be unlike his normal self, and being more quiet. A chubby boy speaks up. "I really liked your rocket." he says. Just then, Ed comes back, holding a box. They all peer inside. Tom smiles from ear to ear. "It's rocket supplies!" he exclaims.

Ed proposes an idea. "Lets make one big rocket, as one big team!" Everyone nods their heads.

"With sparkly pink wings!" adds the blond girl.

"It should have camo wheels!"

"With grey painted on it!"

"Ok, but first, lets build the rocket!" says Tom and Ed together.

After a full day of building, tweaking and painting, the rocket is finally done. "We sure would have won that contest with this rocket!" nods Tom proudly. "I do hope we can enter this next year, it'll win, not doubt!"

Response E

Idea Development: Conventions:

tom wanted to win but ed won .

Response F

Idea Development: Conventions:

Tom walks over to Ed's house with soft cool breeze to his face and a clear perfectly blue glassy sky. As tom arrivaes at the door of Ed's he wonders if he should enter. Tom slowly opens the door and takes a peek inside.

All of the kids at the rocket launch were there. Ed was waiting to start the party, so Tom and the other kids sat down and Tom got to work fixing and showing rockets with Ed. There were red rockets, blue rockets and every other color.

Two hours later every body is ready for there launch. 3 . . . 2 . . . 1 . . . crack sombody hit the launch button and the rockets were off soaring through the sky! like little birds to the glass.

Every one starts going home withe there improved rocket. Everyone was happy. especilly Tom.